

FORMS FOR DOMESTIC UTENSILS, OBTAINED FROM LEAVES.



Fig. 1.

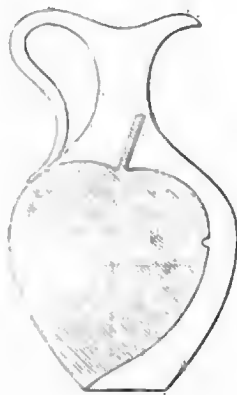


Fig. 2.

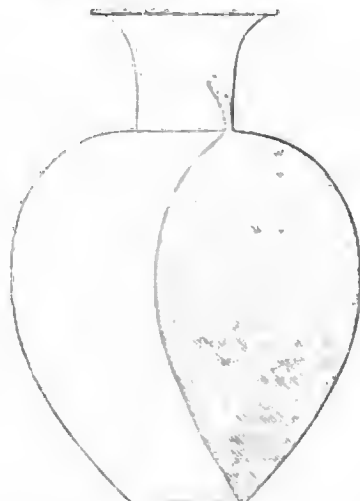


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

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In a paper on Art, read at the Decorative Art Society by Mr. Dwyer, and reported in our pages,* the reader observed, that whatever is truly great or practically useful is always based on simplicity. He was of opinion that the outlines of Greek and Etruscan vases, which had caused much abstruse geometrical investigations into conic sections, had not been produced by geometry, and he then exhibited a series of tracings from the curved outlines of leaves, to shew how simply very refined forms are obtainable. Above we give some applications of the outlines thus obtained. Fig. 1 is from a laurel leaf, fig. 2 from an apple leaf, and fig. 3 from a thornbeam. A geranium leaf produced fig. 4, a second leaf of the same kind giving the neck; and fig. 5 is from a leaf of privet.

THE DUOMO OF FLORENCE.

SIR,—Professor Donaldson's paper on the Duomo of Florence, read at the Royal Institute of British Architects, and reported *verbatim* in THE BUILDER of the 27th ult., is so interesting a document, that I am induced to comment upon it as an example of the necessity of collateral research in professional pursuits after knowledge. When architects of no standing fall into a very usual negligence, the consequences are of little importance; but the fluency, zeal, and reputation of the worthy professor, and perhaps, above

all, his blinding rhetoric, give charms to his communications which, like the florid decorations of latter Gothic edifices, serve to disguise errors of purpose and construction when they occur, and lead the unwary to a wrong appreciation of facts. He informs us, that the design of that edifice "is a bold departure from previous practice by the introduction of a large octagonal vestibule, flanked by three chapels, and surmounted by its enormous dome—a daring transition from established ideas to a new epoch." This is highly complimentary to Arnolfo's energy and talent. He adds, "On the death of Arnolfo, Giotto was appointed to continue the work, in which he seems to have followed most strictly the design of the original architect (Arnolfo), not only in the cathedral but in the campanile or bell-tower." It is, of the kind, the most beautiful production of the art, a perfect gem in design and execution, graceful in form and profuse in marble." Mr. Donaldson further calls Arnolfo and Giotto, "lights in an age of artistic darkness."

Every student, and many others, who heard the professor, must have taken it for granted that Arnolfo was a great and exquisite architect, and that Giotto, from the hopelessness of excelling his productions, adopted them without any exercise of his own genius. But the tables are sadly turned on poor Arnolfo by the following summary charge of the worthy orator:—"In casting off the trammels of the rules of the fantastic style hitherto prevalent, and unacquainted with the severe refinements of classic art, he has produced an enormous but timid and flat development of surface, mechanical and tame, devoid of bold and striking sentiment, and with a total absence of those

dignified and impressive modifications of nature, chiaroscuro; and advancing and receding planes, which form the charm as well of Gothic as of classic art."

I have, in this part of the inquiry as to the danger of giving way to the florid style, a few words to say on the epithet applied to Arnolfo and Giotto,—"lights in an age of artistic darkness." Artistic darkness, indeed! It is the very age of all that is most beautiful in Gothic, and of much that is exquisite in revived art;—the age of Edward the First. The cathedrals of Amiens and Salisbury, the Sainte Chapelle and Waltham Cross, the monuments in Westminster Abbey, of Henry the Third and of Edward's queen, Eleanor, are indications of the "artistic darkness" of that age. Nor must we forget that the sculptor of Edward's queen was the friend, assistant, and rival of Giotto. How can Cavallini and Gentile Fabriano be forgotten? In like manner the Pisani, who preceded, and Taddeo Gaddi, as well as Pietro della Francesca, who immediately followed, must be rescued from "artistic darkness." In truth, the ages of darkness were gone: in 1230, Frederic the Second adopted knowledge from the Saracens and planted it in Italy, in spite of the church: he sowed the seed, and, after his defeat, the commercial republics, liberated from foreign dominion, reaped the harvest. Nor was it in Italy only that every branch, especially of mathematical science, was spreading. Alfonso, king of Castille, and the Polish Vitellin, were also brilliant contemporaries of Arnolfo; and the like must be said of our eminent countrymen John of Halifax (also called de Sacro Bosco), Friar Bacon, and Bishop Grothead. At the same

* See p. 539, ante.